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Philosophy of Education

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“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all”

-Aristotle

Education is a foundation for how we build our lives. In order for someone to become a positive contributor to society, it all starts with what’s done within our classroom. Throughout the years, our education system has taken major steps to get to where we are today. From accessibility, desegregation, to providing access to education for all and the fight against poverty, our schools are slowly getting to the place where we need them to be. There are still many changes that need to come, but it’s our goal and purpose to provide our students the best education we can with the tools and resources that are available to us. During this time, we will see major changes to the educational field, some for the better and some for the worse but we must stick together and focus on our one priority, the students.

I am a person that will do anything to try and make a student be successful. I have learned many valuable lessons and skills throughout my time in the educational system. I have been part of different groups, organizations and workplaces where I learned unique skills that could help me be a successful teacher. One thing I learned was teamwork and communication is vital to relationships and progress. To be a successful educator, you must also be a mentor for all your students. That means building relationships with each student through hobbies, interests or even school work, communicate with them to build one. With that foundation, we will be able to work as a team with other teachers, family members and students to find what’s best for the student’s success in the long run.

Since junior year of high school, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I had a strong passion for helping people and I felt this would be a great way to accommodate to my needs of helping.

Once I knew I wanted to be a teacher, I decided to enroll in an internship at Chariho Regional Middle School with a Social Studies teacher. During this time, I graded papers, helped students, lesson prepped and had fun in the process. This was a very positive experience for me and I loved how all the students looked up to me. However, that didn't always settle right with some of my peers. They would always tell me I wasn't making the right decision, everyone hates teachers and proceeded to tell me how bad our salary was. Even other teachers would tell me I am crazy for entering this profession because of how awful the students are getting and they were being mistreated by the school board and administration. During this time, I began to understand that it was not about the pay we receive, or how undervalued our profession is, it's about the feeling we get when we know we changed a student's life. Being able to say you saved a student from a life on the streets or helped them become the first person in their family to go to college. That is one of my goals of being an educator. I am there to not only to teach but to make a difference in these students lives. That is why I am becoming a teacher and I know I can make the difference I want to make.

Math wasn't always easy for me. I always spent the most time in my educational career working on my math assignments. Strangely, enough, that's what I loved about it. I struggled on a problem, I worked to find the answer, then I would have a sense of accomplishment at the end. I found it fascinating that there are always multiple ways to get to an answer and I want students to understand that. I want my students to enjoy math while having to think critically. I believe I can challenge my students with the use of a hands on curriculum that promotes kinesthetic learning. I believe if students start becoming more hands on in math classes, it will start to change student's perception about math. Not to mention, students can begin to build a growth mindset in classes instead of the standard fixed mindset everyone gets from confusing lectures. I

remember sitting through a lecture in AP Stats at 8 am my senior year of High School. We would sit there and go over how to properly answer a question in statistics. It had to be his way or you were wrong. That was the most boring class I have taken and I never want to make one of my students go through that same misery I felt. Everyone's brain is wired differently, so one can only assume we will derive an answer in a different way than everyone else. That's just an example of how a student can think critically about a problem then just get shot down for not doing it the way we were taught.

Math can get difficult as you continue to go up the ranks. More time and effort is needed and some students are not at the stage they need to be when in these classes. From taking classes in college, I can see some students struggle with basic algebraic concepts or even problem solving skills. This all stems back to the time they are in middle school transitioning into high school. During this time, students start to learn algebraic concepts that are crucial to student's success in later courses. Due to the lacking of skills students leave school with, I want to try and make a difference in 7th and 8th grade or 9th and 10th grade. I want to help students understand why they use certain equations and formulas, not just tell them it works and to trust me. How can we expect our students to learn that way? I want to make sure my students can pinpoint the time we learned about any concept because how fun or entertaining the class was. With all being said, I believe I can make a real difference teaching students algebraic topics and make it stick with them throughout the rest of their educational career. We need to bring some creativity into our lesson plans for not only algebra but every subject area out there. One example, that stuck with me was solving equations with 1 variable. Imagine the variable as a present and everything else around the present is the rest of the equation. To get to it, you need to unwrap the present.

Things like that can make a world of a difference to students that can't just retain information from being told.

One major issue that I have seen during my time working in schools was poverty. This is a very hard topic to deal with. Seeing students come into schools wearing the same clothes or unwashed clothes, no lunch, no backpack or notebook, is very saddening. We need to be willing to help these students by providing them with resources they can use and bring back to their families. I spent a few semesters really looking into poverty and seeing its effects. There are gaps in their education, behavioral levels, social levels and many more areas. We need to be able to direct them and put them down the right path and help as much as we can. Some ways we can do that is by having a food in the classroom for students that can't afford a lunch or have a pencil bank where students can use one for the day. Other ways we can help is by being understanding, don't criticize the students and help them socialize. There are so many stressors that these students face, most of them we don't even know about. I want to be able to help these students, get an education, so they can find a way out of poverty. The first step to achieve this goal is by choosing a location where poverty is very high and there is a lot of diversity throughout the schools. I want to teach in a city, especially one where the state is willing to help. I want to fight to get more funding for these schools to help get these students the education they deserve. We all need to work together to fight this issue and it all starts in the classroom.

My philosophy gears more towards Pragmatism. Pragmatism looks at the idea of evolving and changing. With this type of philosophy, students would learn best through experiences. They apply knowledge to solve problems. I believe that students minds should be looked at as evolving into who they are becoming as a person as they generate their own ideas and beliefs. I believe that students should understand that nothing is ever guaranteed and

everything is changing around them. I believe we should integrate different disciplines to try and solve problems in the world. Teaching students how to uncover problems through reasoning and supporting data will help them solve other problems they face in the real world. We can solve problems by integrating the outside community with the schools. One way to get students these experiences is to use service learning projects that bring together all content areas. Digging deeper into my philosophy, I have a strong connection with one education theory.

Constructivism focuses on developing a personal meaning through hands on learning activities. Less lecture and more opportunities is the main goal of this educational theory. I believe that students should have to dig deep into certain concepts and relate it to the real world. I think the best way to do that is by offering students chances to work with real world problems with projects or taking adventures to the outside world and explore different types of applications. For example, students can work outside trying to find out how tall a building is by using angles and yardsticks outside. Or collect data, graph the data and talk about what the data and graph mean. There are so many different types of ways to bring this content alive so as educators, we need to explore these different ways.

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My personal philosophy also has been shaped by different educational figures throughout the past. The first philosophy I really connected with was Jesus's Philosophy of Education. He wanted to teach well and he wanted all students to learn well. "The didactic methods used by Jesus included: Lecture, reading from texts, storytelling, illustration, parallel sayings, and silence. His interactive methods included: conversation, discussion, question-answer panel. His activity methods were: object lesson, dramatics, demonstration, lavatory and topical research"(Jesus Philosophy, Voices). I believe to have a successful education where you come out being a positive contributor to society, you need to have different ways of interrupting information. Even though I am not a lecture type of teacher, I believe some good can come out of it. We can try to draw conclusions from the information, having conversations and a lot of illustrations. I believe that this method could be very successful especially if we add in some Kinesthetic learning and hands on projects. This is more student centered where the teacher is more of a guide. Storytelling can also be introduced in math lessons by looking at the history of mathematicians or anything interesting about the topic. Storytelling could be a great hook into a lesson. I will certainly look into researching creative stories to intrigue my students.

Another philosophy I connected with was Pestalozzi's Philosophy of Education. He looked at the whole student and tried to stimulate senses with each concept. "Pestalozzi emphasized that learning had to be stimulated by the interests and motivation of the child, not by punishment or fear. Learning had to be completed at each stage before going on to the next" (Voices). I believe that students should have a say in what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. We should be there to provide them with the tools and resources needed to obtain

their learning goals they set. Students then could not move on until they reach their learning goals and I believe that is how math classrooms should be. Why let students continue onto a new topic if they have not obtained the skills needed to move on. That is just setting up students to fall into a bigger snowball than already. We need to be able to step back, help the student achieve goals by providing them with rich, engaging resources. I also don't believe in fear or punishment. That won't help the students learn. That will scare them to learn. Scaring them to learn will not let them explore the content, it will make them just do enough to get by.

With taking all of that into mind, that helped shape how my classroom will be impacted by my philosophy. Here are a few ways that it will affect my classroom:

Classroom organization is that the class should be fun, entertaining, safe and inclusive. I will try to have my desks to be in groups of four. If that is not practical, then I will have the students sit in groups of two. I want to optimize student collaboration and group projects. I will have new groups every 2 weeks. The reason I will switch groups every 2 weeks is so every student can socialize with different people in their class. During this time, I could see which groups of students would work together the best. I will use the walls as a student achievement board and as a resource wall for students that will include inspiration and mathematical formulas. I want the students to feel accomplished for making it on the wall and have something to push towards other than a grade. My room will be very organized. Before I leave for the day, I will go through all the work that needs to be graded, file them appropriately, and clean up any mess that was made. I will have an inbox and out box for student work. In the out box that will be mostly work I am returning or work students missed with their name on it. The in box will be used to collect projects, homework and anything the students would like me to look at.

Motivation will be found for all students by offering multiple projects or topics they can explore. They can become more engaged in a project they want to complete and learn than one they are being forced to. I am also willing to find ways to incorporate the community in my lessons to help teach them how these skills apply to the real world. One way to motivate my students is to tend to their interests and make problems that are class specific to make them laugh.

Content area will fall right into place with my philosophy. There will be some flexibility with my students to explore some topics more deeply they are curious about. During middle level education, my team created a unit around the Olympics where they could examine different aspects of the games. Students would also be driven to explore the games and content further. This will allow the students to take control of the content they find most interesting.

My assessments will mostly be formative. I will have many quizzes that are ungraded and graded where they can get feedback on how they are doing. With these quizzes, they will be able to retake them but they have to relearn the information and retake them. It will be on the students to retake these quizzes; I would not track them down. I will also have individual conferences with students and have entry and exit tickets. Then I will have a project for a summative assessment. With their projects, they will be graded on mathematical correctness, creativity and neatness. I want my students to take chances, that's how we learn.

Classroom climate is a very important piece in having a safe, caring and productive class. You need everyone to feel safe and respected to get everyone to really talk about and learn more about the material. My class will also learn to have fun while in my math class. I love to have fun and joke around with my students so I hope that will lighten everyone up in the class and help build relationships.

The learning focus is on the students. The student has to be learning or we need to reevaluate our delivery style. I want the students to learn through hands activities and projects. I want to move away from the traditional textbook style of learning but I do want them to use it as a guide and a resources. The students will have to solve problems through critical thinking skills. This will help build a strong foundation of skills they will need later on in education.

Technology is becoming a very important tool in classrooms everywhere. I think it will be very useful to use with different projects or class activities to examine certain topics. One tool we can use is GeoGebra to graph lines, look at 3-D figures and make spread sheets to examine data. I can also use this tool to give out home, post class notes and upcoming assignments.

My teacher and leadership style will be that of I am there to assist the students with the tools they need to learn the content and apply it. I will allow students many chances to talk about their work with me and be involved with extracurricular activities to build relationships. I will also be looking for communication from my students about certain projects and when they are struggling, they will seek me out. I want to be more of a facilitator and an active participant in there learning adventure. I believe this type of leadership style can be looked at as lazy, however, I believe that students will not gain the resources they need by just handing them the information. I also believe it is more difficult to use my approach than to stand up and give the information out. I need to collect data on my students, see if they are understanding it, intervene and help them accomplish their goal.

One aspect of my teaching career I really want to work on and pursue is being a mentor, role model and a coach to my students. The best way to do this is to get involved. My major goal for when I enter a school, besides teaching, is to find ways to be involved in extracurricular activities. I want to be a coach of a basketball team, where I can build relationships with my

students. When basketball isn't in session, I would be willing to help at other practices or other clubs to help students have fun. This aspect of teaching is amazing. Helping out with coaching, you see students get challenged mentally and physically and you need to coach them to keep calm and perform. We need to coach them to become men or woman. We help them build as a person. This is the another part of being an educator I will love. Being involved, learning my student's hobbies, beliefs and talents. This will help make communication inside the classroom become more efficient.

I want to be part of a school district that will allow me to have freedom with what I can teach and how I teach it. I want them to push educators to get outside their comfort zones, push them to coach or get involved outside of the school. I want my district to be ok with changing class structures to less of a lectured based education, instead, to a more hands on and creative curriculum. My district must be willing to help all teachers in any way they can. We need support and without support, we can't effectively teach our students. Whether it is from specialized equipment for students with disabilities or it is providing an individualized education for every student to make sure every student is successful we need to have help.

As an educator, it is my job to make sure all of my students to succeed. I believe that with my philosophy and my confidence I have; I can make a positive change in my students lives. Over my time at the University of Maine at Farmington, I was provided with many learning chances, with one more coming with student teaching. I have learned that I am an educator that can bring fun in the classroom and take a step back from lecturing. My hope and goals for the educational field is to show students that school is a safe, fun, creative learning environment where all students can achieve their goals. That all starts with the teachers and how we show our support to our students. My philosophy will impact a school district by showing them that there

are teachers that want the best for each student. It starts with building a foundation for growth with qualified teachers that can incorporate many different learning styles and techniques into a lesson.

With Student teaching coming up, I can't wait to put my philosophy to the test. There are so many different ideas I have to create a fun, productive and engaging classroom. I am sure my philosophy will continue to change throughout student teaching and my career but I know my goals for each one of my students will never change. I want what's best for them. I want to challenge them. I want them to understand. I can't wait to see what my career will pan out to be but I am hopeful my classes I instruct will be very engaging. Student-Centered learning is the best way for students in my discipline to understand these concepts and I plan to show that empathizes this throughout my career.